

## Part 26

### CHAPTER 46

#### *Al-Ahqâf*: The Sandhills

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 4 *sections*; 35 *verses*)

This is the last chapter of the *Hâ Mîm* group, and is entitled *The Sandhills*, the title being taken from the tracts of sand which contributed to the destruction of the tribe of ‘Âd (verse 21). The fact is mentioned to warn the Arabs that, when the fate of a nation is sealed, it may be brought about on sea, as in the case of Pharaoh and his hosts, or on sand, as in the case of the tribe of ‘Âd. For the date of revelation, see introductory note to chapter 40.

The chapter continues the subject-matter of the last chapter, dealing with the truth of revelation in the first section and with the witness of truth in the second. The last two sections, after referring to the fate of ‘Âd, contain a warning for those who reject the truth.

#### SECTION 1: Truth of Revelation

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

##### **1** *Hâ Mîm*

**2** The revelation of the Book is from Allâh, the Mighty, the Wise.

**3** We created not the *samâwât* and the earth and all between them save with truth and for an appointed term.<sup>a</sup> And those who disbelieve turn away from that whereof they are warned.

**3a.** The Universe had a beginning and it will also have an end.

**4** Say: Have you considered that which you invoke besides Allâh? Show me what they have created of the earth, or have they a share in the *samâwât*? Bring me a Book before this or any relics of knowledge, if you are truthful.

**5** And who is in greater error than he who invokes besides Allâh such as answer him not till the day of Resurrection, and they are heedless of their call?

**6** And when human beings are gathered together, they will be their enemies, and will deny their worshipping (them).

**7** And when Our clear messages are recited to them, those who disbelieve say of the Truth when it comes to them: This is clear enchantment.

**8** Nay, they say: He has forged it. Say: If I have forged it, you control naught for me from Allâh.<sup>a</sup> He knows best what you utter concerning it. He is enough as a witness between me and you. And He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.<sup>b</sup>

**9** Say: I am not the first of the messengers,<sup>a</sup> and I know not what will be done with me or with you. I follow naught but that which is revealed to me, and I am but a plain warner.<sup>b</sup>

**8a.** *From Allâh* here means *from the punishment of Allâh*. If the Qur'ân was a lie which the Prophet had forged, none could avert the punishment which must come upon a forger.

**8b.** It is noteworthy that, whenever the punishment of the opponents is alluded to, as in the statement *He is enough as a witness between me and you*, the Divine attribute of mercy and forgiveness is also mentioned to indicate that mercy always predominates in the Divine nature.

**9a.** *Bid'* signifies *a novelty*, or *a thing existing for the first time* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). And you say such a one is *bid'* in this affair *when he is the first who has done it* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Prophets had appeared before the Holy Prophet Muḥammad in every country and nation throughout the whole world, and Allâh's sending messengers for the reformation of men was the universal experience of humanity.

**10** Say: See you if it is from Allâh, and you disbelieve in it, and a witness from among the Children of Isrâ'îl has borne witness of one like him,<sup>a</sup> so he believed, while you are big with pride. Surely Allâh guides not the iniquitous people.

## SECTION 2: Witness of Truth

**11** And those who disbelieve say of those who believe: If it had been a good, they would not have attained it before us. And as they are not guided thereby, they say: It is an old lie.

**12** And before it was the Book of Mûsâ, a guide and a mercy. And this is a Book verifying (it) in the Arabic language,<sup>a</sup> that it may warn those who do wrong, and as good news for the doers of good.

**13** Surely those who say, Our *Rabb* is Allâh, then continue on the right way, on them is no fear, nor shall they grieve.

**9b.** The Prophet is made to deny any detailed knowledge as to the ultimate end of one or the other party, but the warning is reaffirmed in the concluding words to show that evildoers must suffer the evil consequences of their deeds. *I know not*, therefore, simply signifies that *he did not know the details*.

**10a.** The witness from among the Children of Isrâ'îl, who bore witness of one *like him* is Mûsâ: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, *like unto thee*.... And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19). It is to the concluding statement in the above quotation that attention is called in the words, *see you if it is from Allâh, and you disbelieve in it*.

**12a.** The words refer to the subject-matter of verse 10, which speaks of Mûsâ's prophecy. The Qur'ân is here declared as fulfilling that prophecy, and the reference to its being in the Arabic language signifies the coming of the Prophet from among the Ismâ'îlites, who spoke that language, and who were the brethren of the Isrâ'îlites.

**14** These are the owners of the Garden, abiding therein — a reward for what they did.

**15** And We have enjoined on human beings the doing of good to his or her parents. His or her mother bears him or her with trouble and she brings him or her forth in pain. And the bearing of him or her and the weaning of him is thirty months. Till, when he or she attains his maturity and reaches forty years,<sup>a</sup> he or she says: My *Rabb*, grant me that I may give thanks for Your favour, which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases You; and be good to me in respect of my offspring. Truly I turn to Thee, and truly I am of those who submit.

**16** These are they from whom We accept the best of what they do and pass by their evil deeds — among the owners of the Garden. A promise of truth, which they were promised.

**17** And he who says to his parents: Fie on you! Do you threaten me that I shall be brought forth, when generations have passed away before me? And they both call for Allâh's aid: Woe to thee! Believe; surely the promise of Allâh is true. But he says: This is nothing but stories of the ancients.

**18** These are they against whom the word proves true, among nations of the *jinn* and the human beings that have passed away before them. Surely they are losers.

**15a.** It would appear from this that the religious maturity of man usually takes place at the age of forty. Evidence of this is also found in the fact that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad received the Divine message for the regeneration of mankind at the age of forty.

**19** And for all are degrees according to what they do, and that He may pay them for their deeds and they will not be wronged.

**20** And on the day when those who disbelieve are brought before the Fire: You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you enjoyed them; so this day you are rewarded with the chastisement of abasement because you were unjustly proud in the land and because you transgressed.

### SECTION 3: The Fate of 'Âd

**21** And mention the brother of 'Âd; when he warned his people in the sandy plains<sup>a</sup> — and warners indeed came before him and after him — saying: Serve none but Allâh. Surely I fear for you the chastisement of a grievous day.

**22** They said: Have you come to us to turn us away from our gods? Then bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are truthful.

**23** He said: The knowledge is only with Allâh, and I deliver to you that wherewith I am sent, but I see you are an ignorant people.

**24** So when they saw it — a cloud advancing towards their valleys, they said: This is a cloud bringing us rain. Nay, it is that which you sought to hasten, a wind wherein is painful chastisement.

**21a.** The brother of a people signifies their prophet, Hûd being the prophet sent to 'Âd. *Ahqâf* is plural of *hiqf*, which signifies *a heap or hill of sand that has assumed a*

*bowed form*, and *al-Ahqâf* applies, particularly to certain oblong tracts of sand in the region of Esh-Shihr (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Rodwell and Muir locate the ‘Âdites in the country round about Tâ’if; others in Hadramaut. The latter opinion is the correct one, as maps of Arabia plainly show Al-Ahqâf to be situated in Hadramaut.

**25** Destroying everything by the command of its *Rabb*. So at dawn naught could be seen except their dwellings. Thus do We reward the guilty people.

**26** And certainly We had given them power in matters in which We have not empowered you, and We had given them ears and eyes and hearts, but neither their ears, nor their eyes, nor their hearts availed them aught, since they denied the messages of Allâh, and that which they mocked at encompassed them.

#### SECTION 4: A Warning

**27** And certainly We destroyed the towns round about you,<sup>a</sup> and We repeat the messages that they may turn.

**28** Then why did those whom they took for deities besides Allâh to draw (them) nigh (to Him) not help them? Nay, they failed them. And this was their lie and what they forged.

**29** And when We turned towards you a party of the *jinn*,<sup>a</sup> who listened to the Qur’ân; so when they were in its presence, they said: Be silent. Then when it was finished, they turned back to their people warning (them).

**27a.** The cities of ‘Âd, Thamûd and Sheba lay on the borders of Arabia; thus the people living in the metropolis are told how those living around them were aforetime destroyed, and they should take a lesson from their fate.

**29a.** The *jinn* spoken of here seem to be the leaders of certain Jewish tribes, because they are spoken of in the next verse as believers in Mûsâ. In fact, they are of the same class as those spoken of in 72:1; see 72:1a.

**30** They said: O our people, we have heard a Book revealed after Mûsâ, verifying that which is before it, guiding to the truth and to a right path.

**31** O our people accept the Inviter to Allâh and believe in Him. He will forgive you some of your sins and protect you from a painful chastisement.

**32** And whoever accepts not the Inviter to Allâh, he cannot escape in the earth, nor has he protectors besides Him. These are in manifest error.

**33** See they not that Allâh, Who created the *samâwât* and the earth and was not tired by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Aye, He is surely Possessor of power over all things.

**34** And on the day when those who disbelieve are brought before the Fire: Is it not true? They will say: Yea, by our *Rabb!* He will say: Then taste the chastisement, because you disbelieved.

**35** So have patience, as men of resolution, the messengers, had patience, and seek not to hasten on for them (their doom). On the day when they see that which they are promised, (it will be) as if they had not tarried save an hour of the day. (Thine is) to deliver. Shall then any be destroyed save the transgressing people?